

VERTIGO



61

WILLINGHAM
BUCKINGHAM
LEIALOHA



THE
GOOD
PRINCE



2



Jul 07
suggested for
mature readers
vertigo.comics.com



THE FARM--
FABLETOWN'S
UPSTATE ANNEX.

SO,
WILL YOU
DO IT,
BLUE?

WILL YOU
TEACH ME HOW
TO USE THE WITCHING
CLOAK SO THAT I CAN
INVADE THE HOME-
LANDS, LIKE YOU
AND MR. BIGBY
DID?

I THINK I CAN
FIGURE OUT HOW TO USE
THE SWORD ON MY OWN. I JUST
HAVE TO SWING IT IN THE GENERAL
DIRECTION OF THE ENEMY AND
IT DOES *MOST* OF THE
WORK, RIGHT?

I SHOULD
BE ABLE TO CHOP
THEM AS FAST AS THEY
COME AT ME, UNTIL THE
ENTIRE GOB RACE IS
EXTINCT.



IT SHOULDN'T
TAKE MORE THAN A
FEW HUNDRED
YEARS.

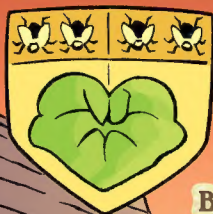
SO, HOW
QUICKLY CAN
WE BEGIN MY
LESSONS?

FLY--

--ARE YOU
SERIOUS?

TRUST ME, MY
DEAREST FRIEND,
WHEN I TELL YOU I
AM IN *DEADLY*
EARNEST.





FORSWORN

Chapter Two of
The Good Prince

In which a naive prince learns (second hand) enough about war to foil some plans, a monkey converses with a corpse, and an old witch reveals certain secrets.

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THEN I GUESS, SINCE YOU ASKED A SERIOUS QUESTION, YOU DESERVE A SERIOUS ANSWER.

FLY, YOU HAVE AN OUTSIDER'S VIEW OF WAR AND ITS REALITIES. I DON'T MEAN TO BE INSULTING, BUT IT'S A CHILD'S VIEW.

IT'S NOT PHYSICALLY POSSIBLE TO DO WHAT YOU IMAGINE, NO MATTER HOW POWERFUL THE WEAPONS ON YOUR SIDE.

ONE MAN CAN'T DESTROY ENTIRE ARMIES IN THE FIELD. NO MAGIC IS THAT ALL-ENCOMPASSING.

NO MATTER HOW MUCH PROTECTION THE WITCHING CLOAK GAVE YOU, YOU'D BE OVERWHELMED THE FIRST TIME YOU FACED MORE THAN A HANDFUL.

GRANTED, BECAUSE THE SWORD DOES MOST OF THE FIGHTING FOR YOU, YOU'D AMAZINGLY KILL TWO OR THREE, BEFORE THE REST GOT UNDER YOUR GUARD.

"OF THOSE, ONE IS ABLE TO UNDO YOUR CLOAK AND YOUR BLOODY TRAIL OF VENGEANCE IS DONE.

"BELIEVE ME, BUDDY, SOME OF THOSE BATTLE-HARDENED GOB TROOPS ARE TRAINED MUCH BETTER THAN I EVER WAS. YOU WOULDN'T LAST A YEAR."



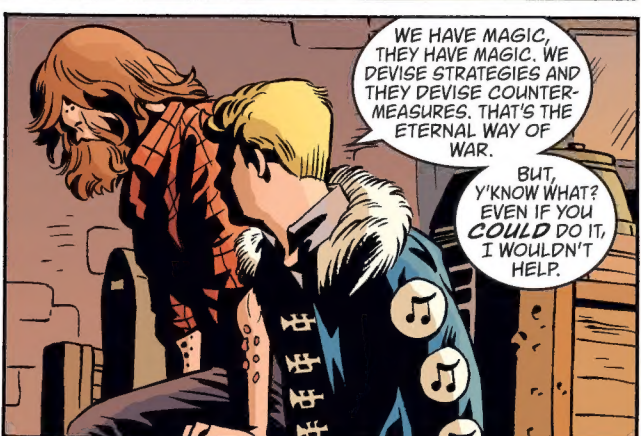
SO I TIE A KNOT IN IT AND--

IT DOESN'T MATTER. MY POINT IS, **SOMEONE** WOULD FIGURE OUT SOME WAY TO COUNTER YOUR PROTECTIONS.



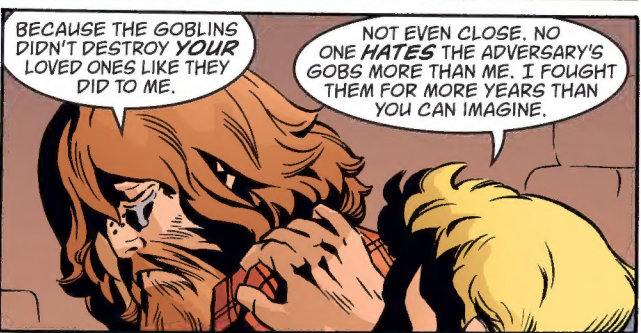
WE HAVE MAGIC, THEY HAVE MAGIC. WE DEVISE STRATEGIES AND THEY DEVISE COUNTER-MEASURES. THAT'S THE ETERNAL WAY OF WAR.

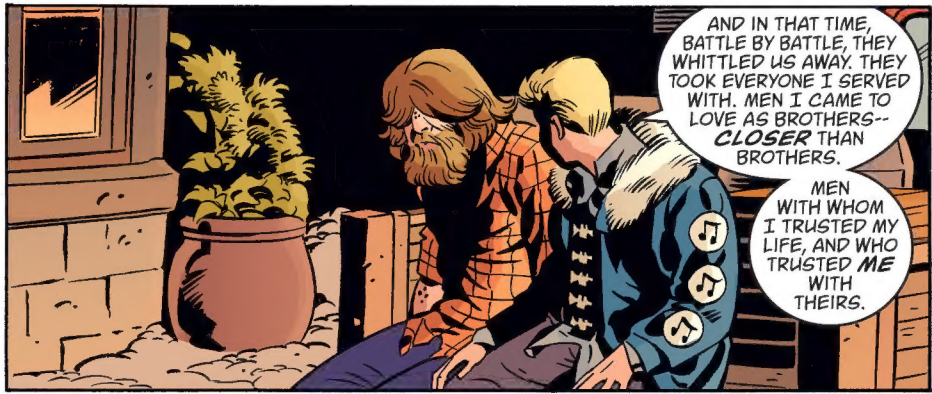
BUT, Y'KNOW WHAT? EVEN IF YOU **COULD** DO IT, I WOULDN'T HELP.



BECAUSE THE GOBLINS DIDN'T DESTROY **YOUR** LOVED ONES LIKE THEY DID TO ME.

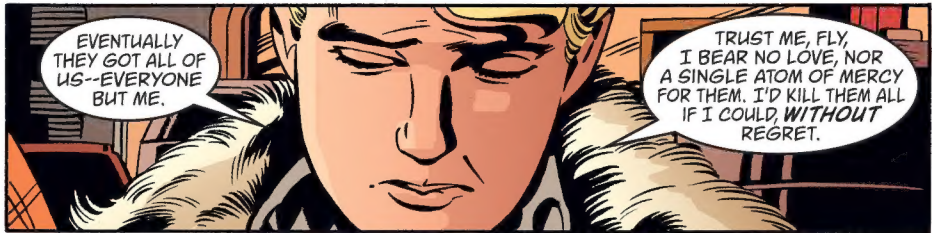
NOT EVEN CLOSE. NO ONE **HATES** THE ADVERSARY'S GOBS MORE THAN ME. I FOUGHT THEM FOR MORE YEARS THAN YOU CAN IMAGINE.





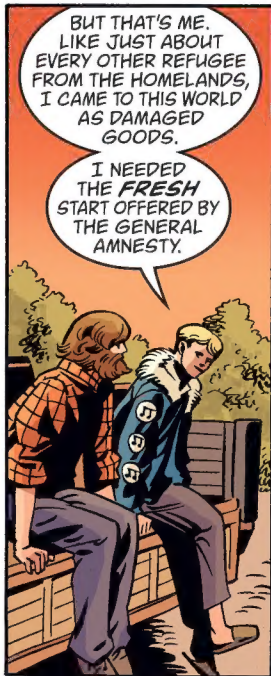
AND IN THAT TIME, BATTLE BY BATTLE, THEY WHITTLED US AWAY. THEY TOOK EVERYONE I SERVED WITH. MEN I CAME TO LOVE AS BROTHERS-- CLOSER THAN BROTHERS.

MEN WITH WHOM I TRUSTED MY LIFE, AND WHO TRUSTED ME WITH THEIRS.



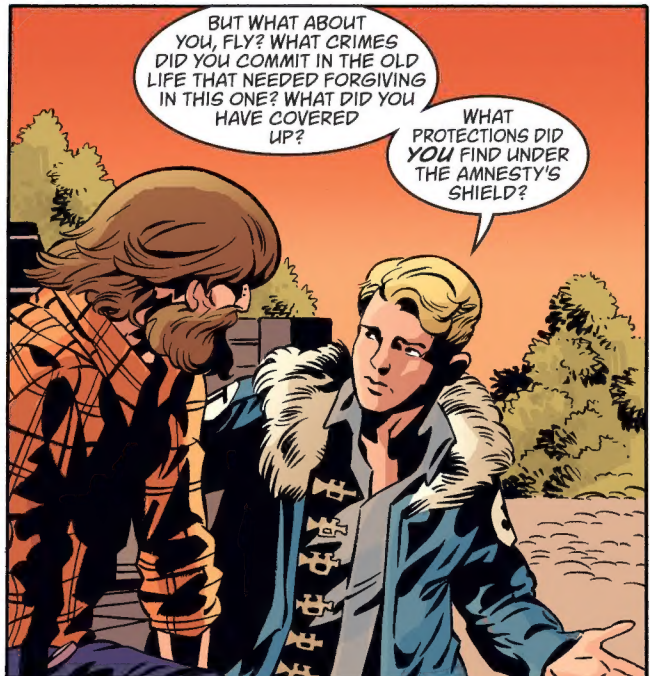
EVENTUALLY THEY GOT ALL OF US--EVERYONE BUT ME.

TRUST ME, FLY, I BEAR NO LOVE, NOR A SINGLE ATOM OF MERCY FOR THEM. I'D KILL THEM ALL IF I COULD, WITHOUT REGRET.



BUT THAT'S ME, LIKE JUST ABOUT EVERY OTHER REFUGEE FROM THE HOMELANDS, I CAME TO THIS WORLD AS DAMAGED GOODS.

I NEEDED THE FRESH START OFFERED BY THE GENERAL AMNESTY.



BUT WHAT ABOUT YOU, FLY? WHAT CRIMES DID YOU COMMIT IN THE OLD LIFE THAT NEEDED FORGIVING IN THIS ONE? WHAT DID YOU HAVE COVERED UP?

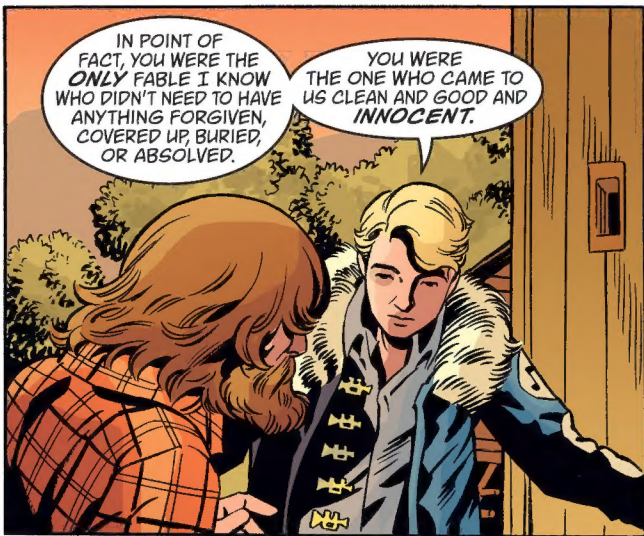
WHAT PROTECTIONS DID YOU FIND UNDER THE AMNESTY'S SHIELD?



I DON'T--

NO NEED TO ANSWER, BUDDY, IT WAS A RHETORICAL QUESTION. I ALREADY KNOW THE ANSWER. I KEPT FABLETOWN'S BOOKS FOR TOO MANY YEARS, REMEMBER?





IN POINT OF FACT, YOU WERE THE **ONLY** FABLE I KNOW WHO DIDN'T NEED TO HAVE ANYTHING FORGIVEN, COVERED UP, BURIED, OR ABSOLVED.

YOU WERE THE ONE WHO CAME TO US CLEAN AND GOOD AND **INNOCENT**.

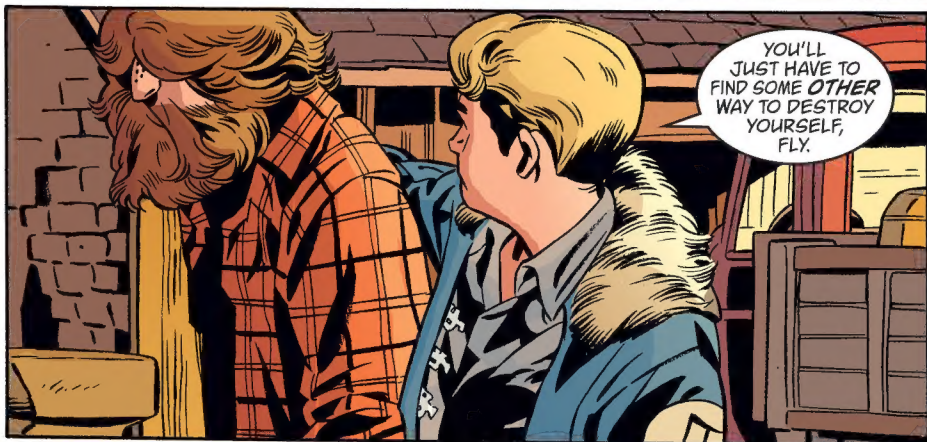


AND THAT'S WHY I WOULD **NEVER** TEACH YOU HOW TO BLOODY YOUR HANDS--NO MATTER HOW NECESSARY OR DESERVED.



HOW MANY YEARS HAVE WE BEEN THE BEST OF FRIENDS?

WHAT COULD **POSSIBLY** MAKE YOU THINK I'D HELP SOIL THE ONE TRULY DECENT FABLE AMONG US--THE ONLY MAN I'VE EVER ADMIRRED WITHOUT RESERVATION?



YOU'LL JUST HAVE TO FIND SOME **OTHER** WAY TO DESTROY YOURSELF, FLY.



NOW, IT'S COLD OUT HERE, AND ROSE WILL WONDER WHAT WE'RE UP TO.

COME IN AND HAVE BREAKFAST.



LATER THAT SAME DAY.

OKAY, MR. DEAD KNIGHT...

FABLETOWN.

...CAN WE MAKE A DEAL?

I'VE BEEN NEGLECTING YOU. I REALIZE THAT NOW.

BUT NO LONGER.

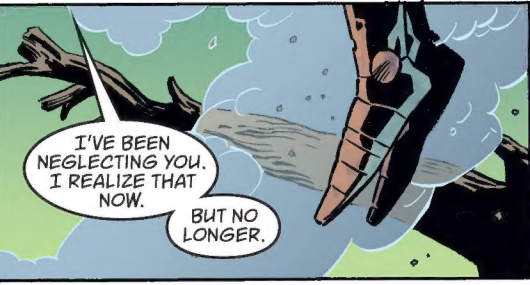
FROM NOW ON I **PROMISE** NEVER TO FORGET TO DUST YOU EVERY DAY. AND POLISH ALL THE RUST OUT OF YOUR ARMOR.

AND I'LL **EVEN** BUY YOU A NEW ROPE, AND ANYTHING ELSE YOU WANT.

ALL YOU HAVE TO DO IS PROMISE NEVER TO TALK SCARY TO ME **ANYMORE**. YOU CAN SAY, "NICE DAY, BUFKIN," OR "HOW ARE YOU, BUFKIN?" BUT NOTHING ELSE, OKAY?

THAT'S A FAIR TRADE, ISN'T IT?

THE TIME IS COMING!

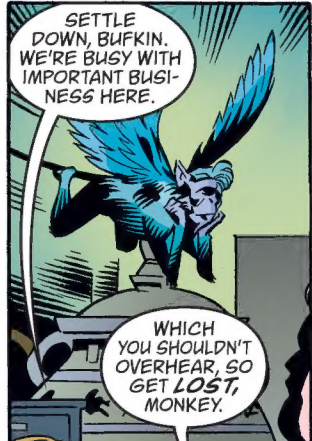




DID YOU HEAR HIM?

DID YOU, HUH? DID YOU?

HE'S TALKING SPOOKY STUFF AT ME AGAIN!



SETTLE DOWN, BUFKIN. WE'RE BUSY WITH IMPORTANT BUSINESS HERE.

WHICH YOU SHOULDN'T OVERHEAR, SO GET LOST, MONKEY.



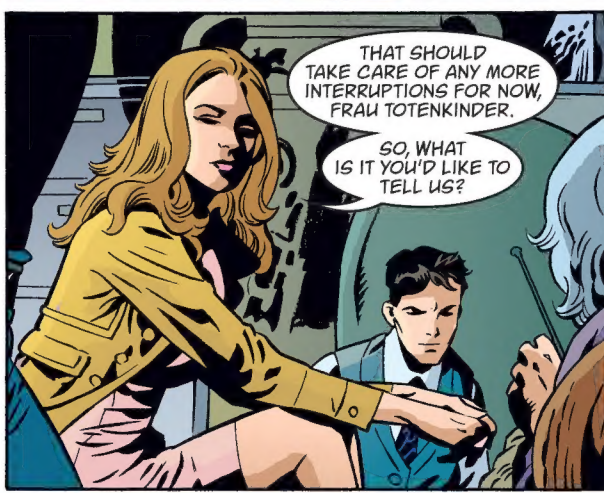
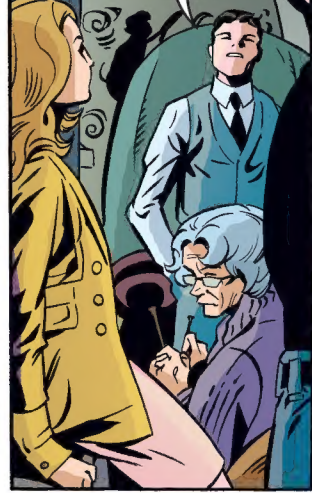
NOW REMEMBER, YOUR HONOR, YOU PROMISED TO QUIT BEING SO SNOTTY TO THE HELP.

DO ME A FAVOR, BUFKIN. GO ANSWER THE PHONES IN MY OFFICE, WHILE WE TALK IN PRIVATE.



AND NO RENAMING OF FABLETOWN AGAIN!

BUSINESS OFFICE



THAT SHOULD TAKE CARE OF ANY MORE INTERRUPTIONS FOR NOW, FRAU TOTENKINDER.

SO, WHAT IS IT YOU'D LIKE TO TELL US?






SOME OF YOU ALREADY KNOW I HAVE MY PRIVATE SPIES IN THE HOMELANDS.


THE TIME HAS COME TO **REVEAL** SOME OF THEM TO YOU AND WHAT I'VE RECENTLY DISCOVERED THROUGH THEIR WATCHFULNESS.



"LONG AGO I DISCOVERED **GEPPETTO** WAS THE REAL ADVERSARY--THE POWER BEHIND THE EMPIRE.



"I KEPT THAT KNOWLEDGE TO MYSELF, UNTIL SUCH TIME AS I COULD REVEAL IT **WITHOUT** DIVULGING MY SOURCES."



WHY WOULD YOU DO THAT? WHY KEEP SUCH **VITAL** INTELLIGENCE TO YOURSELF?

I HAD NO REASON TO REVEAL IT. FOR SO MANY CENTURIES NOT KNOWING WHO THE ADVERSARY WAS DIDN'T ADD TO OUR RISK.



FRAU TOTENKINDER WAS RIGHT TO DO IT AS SHE DID.

I'VE LEARNED ENOUGH ABOUT THE ESPIONAGE GAME TO KNOW THAT PROTECTING ONE'S SOURCES TRUMPS JUST ABOUT ANY OTHER CONSIDERATION.

"I TRIED TO *DISCOVER* HIS IDENTITY IN ANOTHER WAY, SO I COULD INFORM YOU WITHOUT DIVULGING MY PERSONAL SECRETS."

WHO IS THE ADVERSARY?



"IN ANY CASE, YOU EVENTUALLY LEARNED HIS IDENTITY THROUGH *OTHER MEANS*."

YOU'RE HIM, RIGHT? YOU'RE THE REAL EMPEROR.



FINE! WE'LL GET BACK TO THAT LATER. PLEASE CONTINUE.

GEPPETTO CARVED MANY NEW SONS AND DAUGHTERS EVERY YEAR. IN TIME HE TRAINED OTHERS TO HELP HIM CREATE MORE CHILDREN, FASTER.



"JUNIOR APPRENTICES HANDLE THE ROUGH WORK, CARVING OUT BODIES AND LIMBS."



"SENIOR APPRENTICES PERFORM THE MORE DELICATE WORK--FINISHING THE HEADS AND HANDS, FOR EXAMPLE."



"THEN, AFTER THE FINISHED WORK IS PERSONALLY INSPECTED AND APPROVED BY GEPPETTO, ONE OF THREE PAINTERS ADDS THE FINAL TOUCHES--ONLY *ONE* OF WHOM PAINTS EYES."



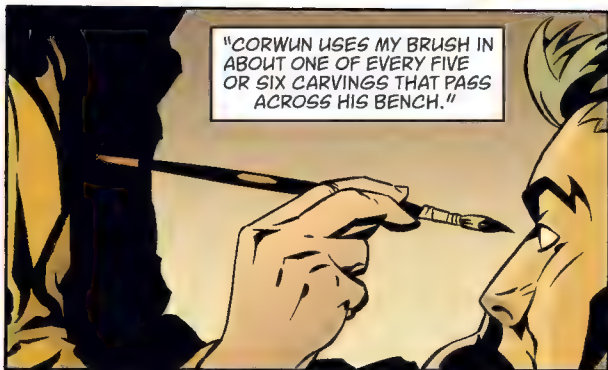
"SENIOR ASSISTANT CORWUN PEIDERPESTLE PAINTS THE EYES FOR *EVERY* WOODEN CREATURE THAT PASSES THROUGH GEPPETTO'S WORKSHOP."




"THROUGH METHODS I WILL *CONTINUE* TO KEEP TO MYSELF, I WAS ABLE TO PLACE A PERSONALLY ENCHANTED PAINTBRUSH IN AMONG CORWUN'S TOOLS."




"CORWUN USES MY BRUSH IN ABOUT ONE OF EVERY FIVE OR SIX CARVINGS THAT PASS ACROSS HIS BENCH."






"WHEN CORWIN *DOES* USE MY BRUSH TO PAINT A NEW CARVING'S EYES, I'M ABLE TO SEE THROUGH THOSE EYES, WHENEVER I WISH.

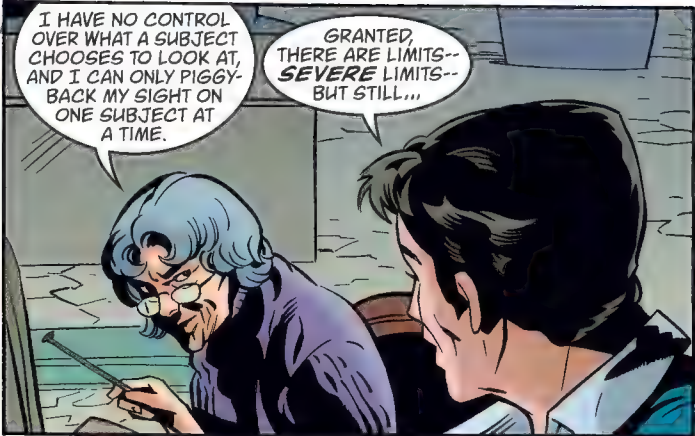


"THE SUBJECT OF MY MAGIC IS UNAWARE THAT I MAY BE LOOKING OUT THROUGH HIS EYES, *SEEING* WHAT HE SEES."




WHY, THAT'S MARVELOUS! HOW MANY DO YOU CONTROL? HUNDREDS? *THOUSANDS*? WE CAN MONITOR JUST ABOUT EVERYTHING HIS WOODEN SOLDIERS DO!

NOT NEARLY, PRINCE CHARMING. IT TAKES A CONSIDERABLE EXPENDITURE OF POWER EACH TIME I OVERSEE ANYTHING.



I HAVE NO CONTROL OVER WHAT A SUBJECT CHOOSES TO LOOK AT, AND I CAN ONLY PIGGY-BACK MY SIGHT ON ONE SUBJECT AT A TIME.

GRANTED, THERE ARE LIMITS-- *SEVERE* LIMITS-- BUT STILL,...



SOMETIMES I GET LUCKY. ONCE IN A GREAT WHILE I GET *VERY* LUCKY.

"ONE OF MY SPIES IS A WOODEN OWL GEPPETTO CARVED HIMSELF. I SUSPECT HE WANTED A PET, AND DECIDED TO CREATE ONE AS LOYAL TO HIM AS HIS CARVEN CHILDREN.



"IN ANY CASE, HE KEEPS HIS OWL CLOSE. ONE DAY I OVERSAW GEPPETTO DISCUSSING VERY SECRET PLANS WITH THE SNOW QUEEN."



I COULDN'T ACTUALLY HEAR WHAT THEY SAID, OF COURSE, BUT I'VE GROWN QUITE ADEPT AT READING LIPS.

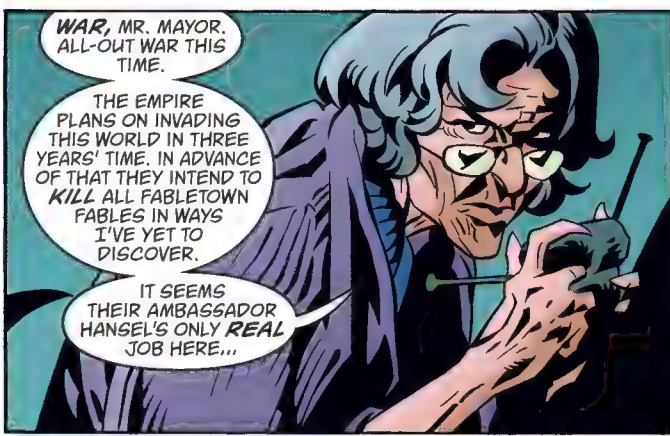


SO WHAT DID YOU FIND OUT? WHAT'S HE PLANNING?

WAR, MR. MAYOR. ALL-OUT WAR THIS TIME.

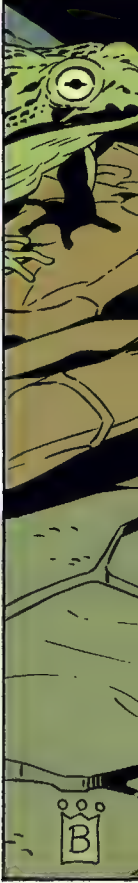
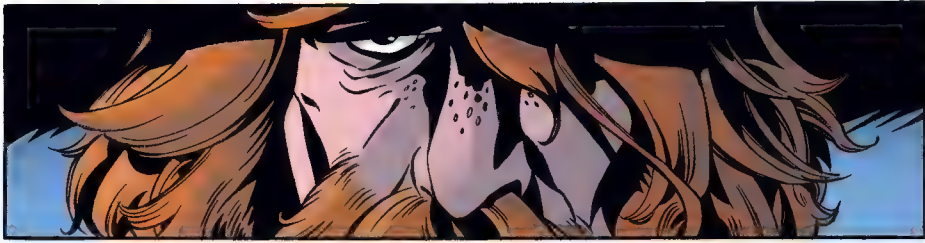
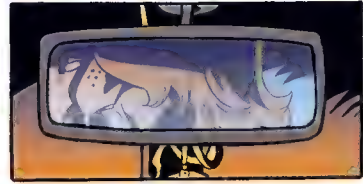
THE EMPIRE PLANS ON INVADING THIS WORLD IN THREE YEARS' TIME. IN ADVANCE OF THAT THEY INTEND TO KILL ALL FABLETOWN FABLES IN WAYS I'VE YET TO DISCOVER.

IT SEEMS THEIR AMBASSADOR HANSEL'S ONLY REAL JOB HERE...



...IS TO DEVISE SOME WAY TO SPIRIT AWAY ALL OF OUR CAPTURED WOODEN HEADS BEFORE THE KILLINGS BEGIN.





DAYS PASS.

IT'S
NEARLY
TIME!

YOIKS!

PLEASE,
PLEASE,
PLEASE!

YOU
HAVE TO STOP
SAYING CRYPTIC,
SCARY
THINGS!

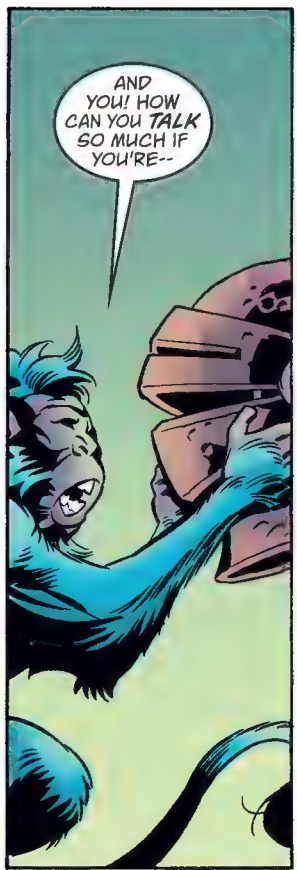
YOU NEVER
GIVE ANY *DETAILS*,
SO NOTHING YOU
SAY IS EVER
USEFUL.

SO THERE'S
REALLY NO REASON
TO SPEAK AT ALL,
RIGHT?





I AM ONE SCREWED MONKEY!



AND YOU! HOW CAN YOU TALK SO MUCH IF YOU'RE--

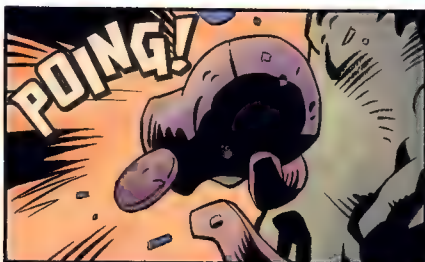


--EMPTY?



BAD, BAD FORSWORN KNIGHT!

BAD, DECEPTIVE GHOST!



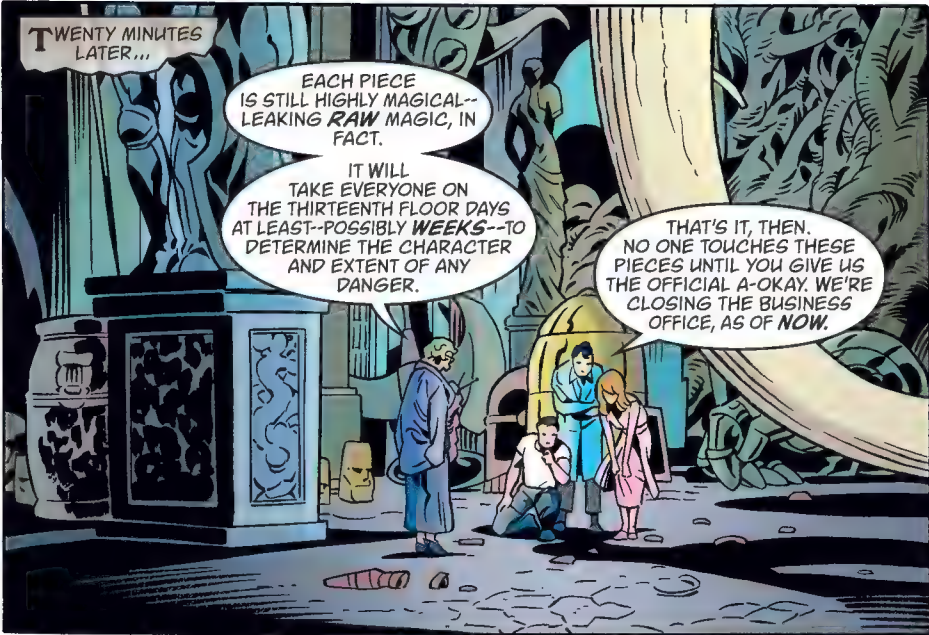


LATER THAT SAME NIGHT...

HE DID WHAT?

NO, DON'T TOUCH ANYTHING! I'LL BE RIGHT DOWN!

BUT IF SOMEONE ACCIDENTALLY KILLS THE MONKEY BEFORE I GET THERE, I PROMISE THERE'LL BE NO INVESTIGATION.



TWENTY MINUTES LATER...

EACH PIECE IS STILL HIGHLY MAGICAL--LEAKING RAW MAGIC, IN FACT.

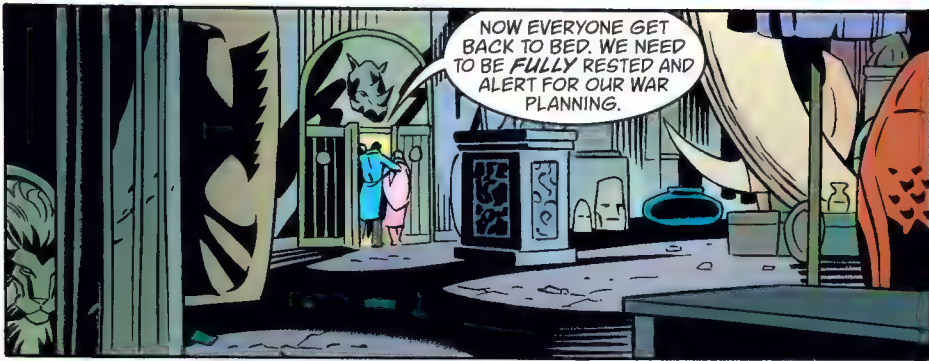
IT WILL TAKE EVERYONE ON THE THIRTEENTH FLOOR DAYS AT LEAST--POSSIBLY WEEKS--TO DETERMINE THE CHARACTER AND EXTENT OF ANY DANGER.

THAT'S IT, THEN. NO ONE TOUCHES THESE PIECES UNTIL YOU GIVE US THE OFFICIAL A-O-KAY. WE'RE CLOSING THE BUSINESS OFFICE, AS OF NOW.



WE'LL WORK OUT OF THE PENTHOUSE IN THE MEANTIME.

AND, BEAUTY, FIND THAT DAMNED MONKEY AND THEN FIND SOMEPLACE TO BUNK HIM. IF NO ONE'S WILLING TO PUT HIM UP, LOCK HIM IN THE DETENTION CELL.



NOW EVERYONE GET BACK TO BED. WE NEED TO BE FULLY RESTED AND ALERT FOR OUR WAR PLANNING.

B

B

TWO DAYS LATER...

OKAY, ENOUGH ARGUING FOR NOW. IT'S TIME TO MAKE A FEW DECISIONS-- SET SOME THINGS IN MOTION.

BEAUTY, SET UP ANOTHER MEETING WITH AMBASSADOR HANSEL FOR TOMORROW. IN THE PARK LIKE LAST TIME.

ARE YOU GOING TO CONFRONT HIM WITH WHAT WE'VE DISCOVERED?

EVERYONE IN THIS ROOM KEEPS MUM ABOUT THE COMING WAR, FOR NOW. AND THAT MEANS CONTINUING TO TREAT HANSEL AND HIS GOONS WITH EVERY POSSIBLE COURTESY.

NOT A CHANCE. I'M CERTAINLY GOING TO PUT HIM ON THE SPOT, BUT IN A WAY THAT REVEALS NOTHING OF WHAT WE'VE LEARNED.

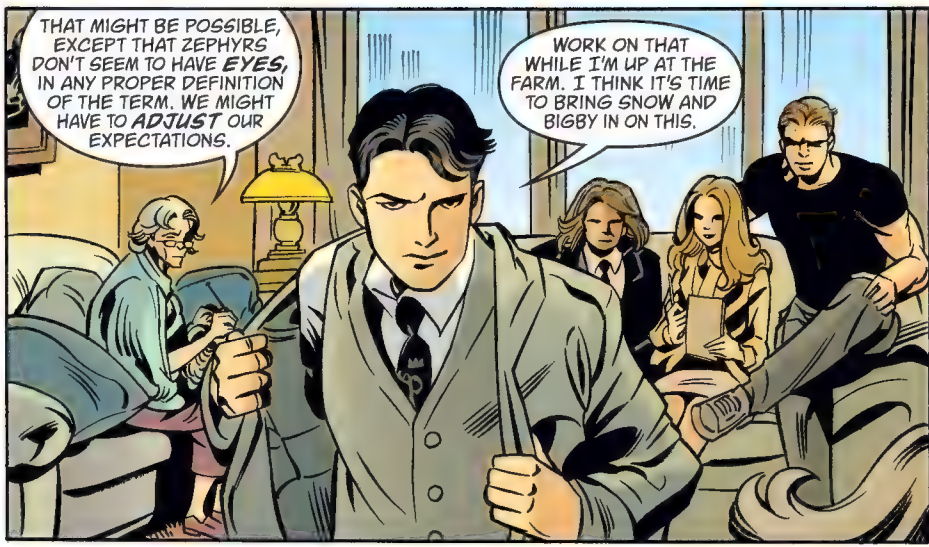
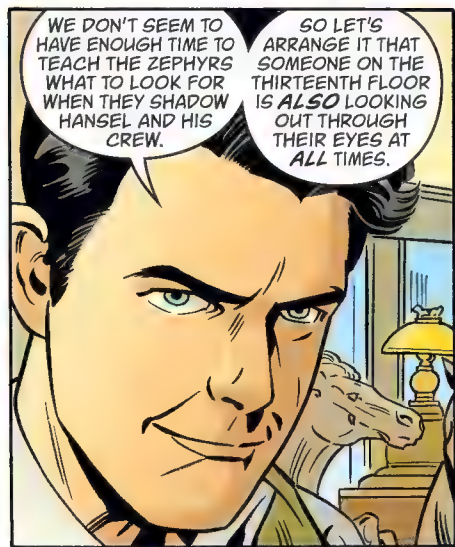
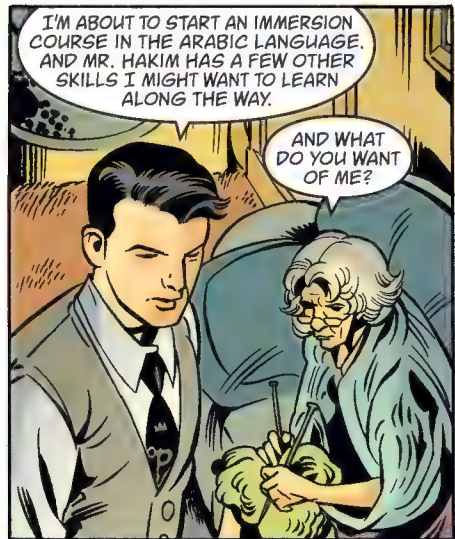
MOWGLI, YOU'RE ON YOUR WAY BACK TO BAGHDAD. LEAVE TODAY. YOU'RE GOING TO SEND KING COLE BACK HOME. TELL HIM TO PACK FOR A LONG STAY.

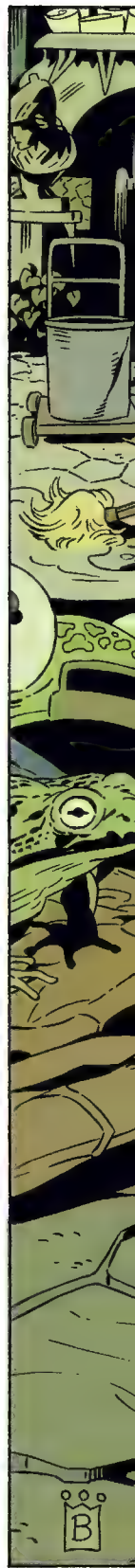
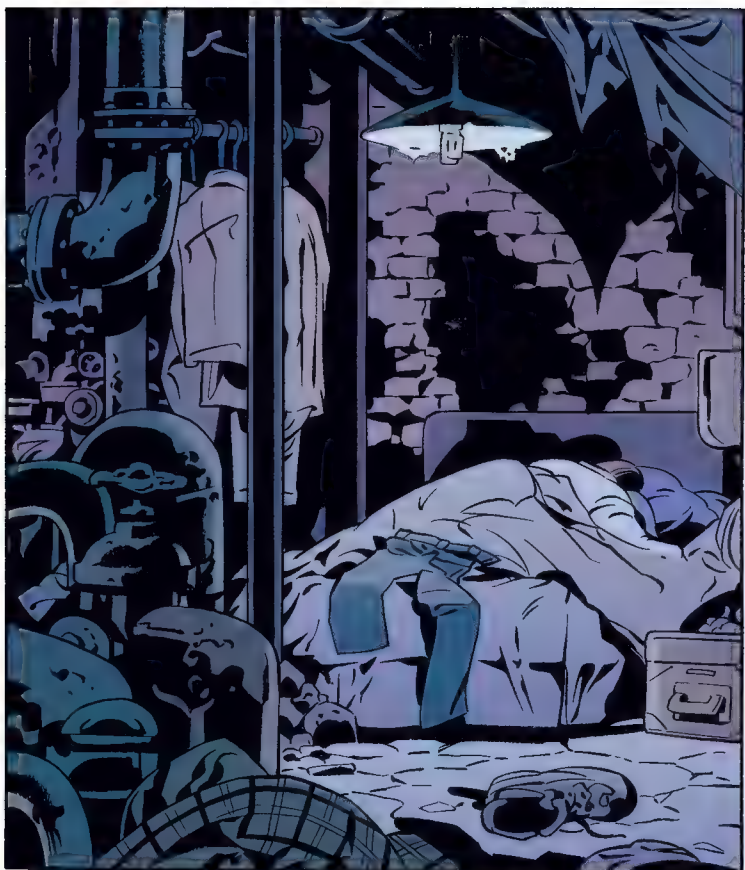
AND YOU'LL BE TAKING HIS PLACE AS OUR AMBASSADOR TO FABLETOWN EAST WHILE HE'S GONE.

OKAY.

BEAUTY, DO YOU HAVE THE LIST OF INSTRUCTIONS PREPARED FOR MOWGLI?

MEMORIZE THESE BEFORE YOU LEAVE THIS ROOM. MAKE SURE I GET EVERY PAGE BACK.







GOOD EVENING, PRINCE AMBROSE. I'M THE FORSWORN KNIGHT--OR HIS GHOST, ANYWAY, RECENTLY FREED FROM MY ARMOR AFTER ALL THESE CENTURIES.

AND NOW I'M YOUR GUIDE FOR THE FIRST PART OF YOUR JOURNEY. DO YOU PREFER TO BE CALLED FLY OR AMBROSE?

YOU CAN CALL ME LANCE.

NEXT:
When Knighthood was in Flower.

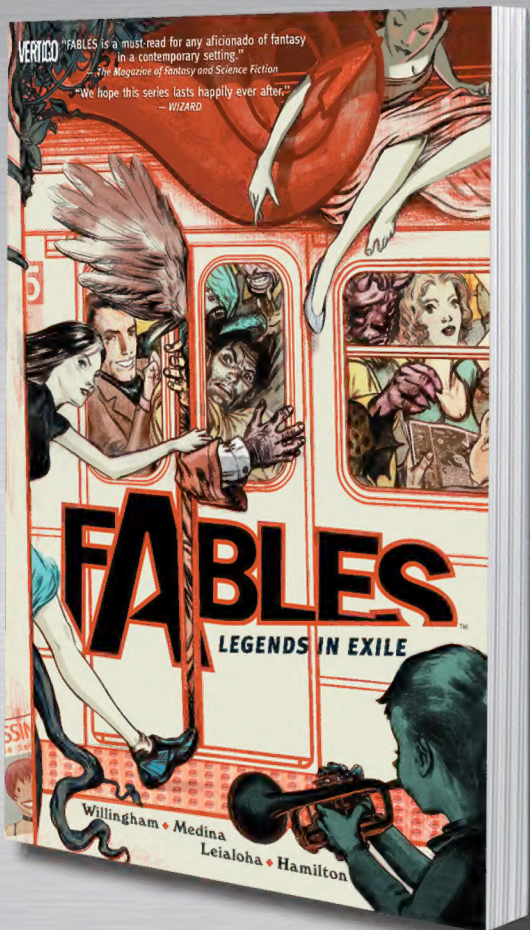
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BILL WILLINGHAM

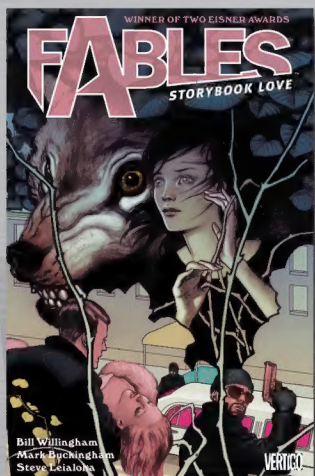
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– THE WASHINGTON POST



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- VOL. 5: THE MEAN SEASONS
- VOL. 6: HOMELANDS
- VOL. 7: ARABIAN NIGHTS (AND DAYS)
- VOL. 8: WOLVES
- VOL. 9: SONS OF EMPIRE
- VOL. 10: THE GOOD PRINCE
- VOL. 11: WAR AND PIECES
- VOL. 12: THE DARK AGES
- VOL. 13: THE GREAT FABLES CROSSOVER
- 1001 NIGHTS OF SNOWFALL



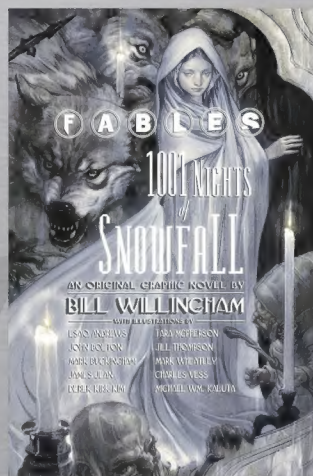
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STORYBOOK LOVE



FABLES VOL. 6:
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